

PHI6667 SEMINAR IN ETHICS Fall 2021

Instructor: Dr. Ronnie de Sousa Email: rbondesousaperne@ufl.edu

Office: Griffin-Floyd Hall, room 200

Office Hours: Normally W: 4-5 in, or by appointment

Class: 22195 Time: 3-5:50 PM in Griffin-Floyd Hall, room 200

Communication: please use email. Allow 24 hours for an answer.

Required Texts: There are no required texts to buy. Reading materials will be posted on Canvas unless there is a direct link to a copy on the internet. It is your responsibility to download them and read them. The readings may not all be immediately available, but the bibliography below will enable you to procure them independently if you want.

Course Description The specific topic of this course is: *The Epistemology of Value*. Epistemology is concerned with the acquisition and justification of knowledge. In this course, we will ask whether there is any knowledge to be had about value. We will first need to ask: What is a value? How does it relate to a thing's *having* value, and to a person's *valuing* something? Are there different kinds of value? How do they relate to each other? In particular, is moral value a distinct kind of value? Are there objective truths about values? Or are they mere projections of our emotional attitudes? What is the role of *reasons* in our conception of *reason*? Do reasons constitute values, or are reasons derived from values? While many of our moral and other values are learned in kindergarten, they are typically debated in what appears to be rational discourse. But the power of rational argument to change such attitudes is limited. It is often noted that political stances are "emotional" rather than rational. Some have even claimed that all rational justification is mere post-hoc rationalization. We will conclude with some considerations about the role of argument in persuasion in matters of value, with specific reference to the ways in which rational argument fails to persuade.

Components of Course Grade:

- Critical Summary of a short article in Week 2. 5%
- Two in-class reports/ discussion starters: 2x15%= 30%
- Participation in the seminar discussion: 15%
- Final Essay: due Dec 10 before midnight 50%
- Total: 100%

Participation: this portion of your grade will depend on your engagement and contribution (quality, not quantity). Quality participation in discussion depends upon being prepared and making a substantial effort to engage the material in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: This is subject to change or adjustment as we go.

REC means recommended. If you choose that week's topic to focus on in your final paper, you will be expected to have read and use all the texts for that week, including the REC ones.

For the papers you will present and introduce in class, you will normally choose the lead paper mentioned (or one of them if there is more than one). If, however, you are interested in a topic but would rather present a REC rather than the week's main paper, please let me know: we can be flexible about this. For the detailed reference to each article or book mentioned, see the bibliography below.

WEEK 1 8/27 Introduction to the themes of the course. No readings will be required before our first meeting. Thereafter, readings must be mastered before class. You will be invited to volunteer for TWO specific dates on which you will be responsible for introducing the lead paper for the week. For each, please provide 3 choices in order of preference. I will endeavor to give you your top preference but will try to distribute equitably if there are more volunteers for some than others.

WEEK 2 9/3 We will collate and finalize your preferred dates today. Your first written assignment (a very modest and easy one) is due today.

Read (Sayre-McCord, 2021), (Enoch, 2018). **Write** a brief (500 word) critical summary of Enoch, and submit it by email by the time of the beginning of the course meeting.

WEEK 3 9/10 Desire and Belief: where do values belong (de Sousa, 1974);

REC: (Chang, 2001) (Hurka, 1996)

WEEK 4 9/17 Evolutionary accounts (Thompson, 2002) (de Sousa, 1980)

REC (Lutz & Lenman, 2021):

WEEK 5 9/24 Evolutionary Ethics, vs "Debunkers" (Street, 2006)

REC (Gowans, 2021)

WEEK 6 10/1 Debunking the debunkers (Vavova, 2015) (Berker, 2014):

REC (Bagnoli, 2019)

WEEK 7 10/8 – NO CLASS – HOMECOMING

WEEK 8 10/15 Emotions and value I Tappolet (Rossi & Tappolet, 2018)

REC: (de Sousa, 2009)

WEEK 9 10/22 Emotions and value II (Mulligan, 2010) (D'Arms & Jacobson, 2007);

REC: (Street, 2010)

WEEK 10 10/29 Do we have reason to be rational? (Kolodny, 2005)

REC: chapter 1 of (Rowlands, 2018); also ch. 10 :

WEEK 11 11/5 Modes of sentimentalism: realism; projectivism, (Wiggins, 1987) .

REC (de Sousa, 2020)

WEEK 12 11/12 Moral Relativism (Harman, 1975) (Prinz, 2007);;

REC (Lutz & Lenman, 2021)

WEEK 13 11/19 Values and Persuasion (Mercier & Sperber, 2011) (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010);

REC: (Wood & Porter, 2019) (Baurmann, 2007)

WEEK 14 NO CLASSES – THANKSGIVING

WEEK 15 12/3 Summary and Wrap-up. No New Readings.

FINAL PAPER DUE 12/10

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LIST OF READINGS REFERRED TO ABOVE (alphabetized):

Bagnoli, C. (2019). Ethical objectivity: The test of time. *Ratio*, pp. 1–14.

Baurmann, M. (2007). Rational fundamentalism: An explanatory model of fundamentalist belief. *Episteme*, 4(2), 150–166.

Berker, S. (2014). Does Evolutionary Psychology Show That Normativity Is Mind-Dependent? In J. D’Arms & D. Jacobson (eds), *Moral Psychology and Human Agency: Philosophical Essays on the Science of Ethics* (pp. 215–251). New York: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198717812.003.0010

Chang, R. (2001). Value pluralism. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 16139–16145). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

D’Arms, J., & Jacobson, D. (2007). Sensibility theory and projectivism. In D. Copp (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* (pp. 186–218). New York: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195325911.003.0008

de Sousa, R. (1974). The good and the true. *Mind*, 83, 534–551.

de Sousa, R. (1980). Arguments from nature. *Zygon*, 15, 169–191.

de Sousa, R. (2009). What else is there? Emotions, value, and morality. *Critical Quarterly*, 50(42), 12–24.

de Sousa, R. (2020, 8/04/2020). Emotions and the ontology of values. APA Pacific, cancelled - Presented at PEA Soup Discussion Forum.

Enoch, D. (2018). Why I am an objectivist about ethics (and why you are, too). In Shafer-Landau, *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, 4th edition. (pp. 208–221). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Gowans, C. (2021). Moral Relativism. In E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition)..
- Harman, G. (1975). Moral relativism defended. *Philosophical Review*, 84(1), 3–22.
- Hurka, T. (1996). Monism, pluralism, and rational regret. *Ethics*, 106(3), 555–575.
- Kolodny, N. (2005). Why Be Rational? *Mind*, 144(455), 509–563. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzi509>
- Lutz, M., & Lenman, J. (2021). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (E. A. Zalta, Ed.).
- Mercier, H., & Sperber, D. (2011). Why do humans reason? Arguments for an argumentative theory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 34(2), 57–74.
- Mulligan, K. (2010). Emotions and value. In P. Goldie (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of philosophy of emotion* (pp. 475–500). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2010,). When corrections fail: the persistence of political misperceptions. *Political Behavior*, 30, 303–330.
- Prinz, J. (2007). Ch. 5 Dining with Cannibals. In *The emotional construction of morals* (pp. 175–214). New York.: Oxford University Press.
- Rossi, M., & Tappolet, C. (2018). What kind of evaluative states are emotions? The attitudinal theory vs. the perceptual theory of emotions. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. doi: 10.1080/00455091.2018.1472516
- Rowlands, R. (2018). *The normative and the evaluative: The Buck-Passing account of value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sayre-McCord, G. (2021). Moral Realism. In Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition).
- Street, S. (2006). A Darwinian dilemma for realist theories of value. *Philosophical Studies*, 127, 109–166. doi: 10.1007/s11098–005–1726–6
- Street, S. (2010). What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics. *Philosophy Compass*, 5(5), 363–384. doi: 10.1111/j.1747–9991.2009.00280.x
- Thompson, P. (2002). The evolutionary biology of evil. *Monist*, 85(2), 239–259.
- Vavova, K. (2015). Evolutionary debunking of moral realism. *Philosophy Compass*, 10(2), 104–116. doi: 10.1111/phc3.12194
- Wiggins, D. R. (1987). A sensible subjectivism. In *Needs, values, truth* (pp. 185–214). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wood, T., & Porter, E. (2019, 1 December). The elusive backfire effect: Mass attitudes’ steadfast factual adherence. *Political Behavior*, 41(1), 135–63. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2819073